

What is claimed is:

1. A method for performing an operation on a graphic object in a display of overlapping graphic objects in a data processing system, the method comprising the steps of:
 - detecting the position of a pointer on said display;
 - displaying to a user an indication of potential target objects of said operation which coincide with said pointer position;
 - detecting a selection of one of said indicated potential target objects as the target object; and
 - performing said operation on said target object.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of selecting the operation to be performed on said target object.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein said step of selecting an operation comprises detecting a user input identifying selection of a manipulation tool.
4. The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of changing the form of said pointer on said display in response to detection of said user input selection.
5. The method of claim 2, wherein said step of selecting the operation to be performed comprises selecting a source

object and said step of performing the operation comprises dropping said source object onto said target object.

5 6. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of storing the positions of said graphic objects on said display and comparing said pointer position with said graphic object positions to determine which objects are coincident with the pointer.

10 7. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of maintaining a record of attributes relating to each of said graphic objects.

15 8. The method of claim 1, wherein said displaying step comprises displaying to the user a hover window listing said graphic objects which are coincident with said pointer position.

20 9. The method of claim 8, wherein said displaying step comprises displaying on the list only those graphic objects which are coincident with said pointer position and on which the operation could be performed.

25 10. The method of claim 1, further comprising making said target object visible during performance of the operation on said target object.

11. The method of claim 10, further comprising the step of determining whether said target object is the outermost one of said graphic objects which are coincident with the position of the pointer.

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12. The method of claim 11, wherein the step of making said target object visible comprises temporarily making at least the outermost one of said coincident graphic objects transparent.

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13. The method of claim 12, wherein the outermost coincident object is a child to a parent object and the step of making the selected target object visible comprises temporarily making both the child and its parent object transparent.

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14. The method of claim 12, wherein said outermost one of the coincident graphic objects reappears automatically after the operation has been performed on said target object.

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15. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of displaying an indication of coincident graphic objects is dependent on said position of the pointer remaining the same for a certain period of time.

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16. A software tool for manipulating a graphic object in a display of overlapping graphic objects in a data processing system, the tool being operable to:

detect the position of a pointer on said display;

5 display to a user an indication of potential target objects of the manipulation operation which coincide with said pointer position;

detect a selection of one of said indicated potential target objects as the target object; and

10 perform the manipulation operation on said target object.

17. The software tool of claim 16, further operable to detect a user selection of the manipulation operation to be performed on said target object.

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18. The software tool of claim 17, operable to change the form of said pointer on said display in response to detection of said user input selection.

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19. The software tool of claim 17, operable to select a source object and drop said source object onto said target object.

25 20. The software tool of claim 16, operable to store the positions of said graphic objects on said display and compare said pointer position with said graphic object

positions to determine which objects are coincident with the pointer.

21. The software tool of claim 16, operable to maintain a record of attributes relating to each of said graphic objects.

22. The software tool of claim 16, operable to display to the user a hover window listing said graphic objects which are coincident with said pointer position.

23. The software tool of claim 22, operable to list only those graphic objects which are coincident with said pointer position and on which the operation could be performed.

24. The software tool of claim 16, operable to make said target object visible during performance of the operation on said target object.

25. The software tool of claim 24, operable to determine whether said target object is the outermost one of said graphic objects which are coincident with the position of the pointer.

26. The software tool of claim 24, operable to make at least the outermost one of said coincident graphic objects temporarily transparent.

5 27. The software tool of claim 26, operable to make said outermost one of the coincident graphic objects reappear automatically after the operation has been performed on said target object.

10 28. A program element comprising program code operable to provide the software tool of claim 16.

29. The program element of claim 28 on a carrier medium.

15 30. A carrier medium comprising a computer program element including computer program instructions to implement the method of claim 1.

20 31. The carrier medium of claim 30, comprising one or more of the following set of media: a signal, a magnetic disk or tape, solid-state memory, a compact disk and a digital versatile disk.

25 32. A data processing system comprising a software tool according to claim 16.